

Cuban Subversive Activities in Africa

The Castro regime is continuing to play a substantial role in training and advising a number of African extremist organizations as well as giving assistance to a number of radical African governments. Fidel Castro has been impressed with the revolutionary milieu of Africa since at least 1961 when the Cubans provided guerrilla warfare training to some African extremist groups.

There are at least two probable reasons for Castro's desire to meddle in African affairs. Such activity serves to enhance his credentials as the self-proclaimed leader of the "anti-imperialist forces of the underdeveloped world." Moreover, friendly ties with like-minded regimes in Africa help Cuba avoid the pinch of world-wide diplomatic isolation with which it has been threatened in recent years.

The Cuban presence in Africa is not large. However, in at least one instance, in Congo (Brazzaville), Havana has been able to make a major contribution to maintaining a radical regime in power. Cuban assistance to various African rebel groups is unlikely to meet with the same success as its Congo (Brazzaville) activities. Nevertheless, a relatively small contribution of Cuban training, materiel, or manpower would increase their potential.

In general, Cuban efforts in Africa fall into three categories. In some places--the Congo (Kinshasa) and Portuguese Africa--the Cubans have focused on training and advising rebel groups seeking to overthrow existing regimes. In others, such as the Congo (Brazzaville) and Mali, Havana is granting military and technical assistance to support existing regimes. Elsewhere--in Tanzania, Guinea, and Algeria, for example--the Cubans are merely trying to maintain the good will of regimes whose diplomatic support would be beneficial in international forums.

Havana has been a good deal bolder in supporting insurgent activities in Africa than in Latin America. It has sent several hundred Cuban military and technical personnel to Africa as well as sizable quantities of arms and ammunition. The Cubans have not confined their activities

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in Africa solely to military assistance, however. A number of scholarships are granted to African students each year. On 2 July 1966, the Congo (Brazzaville) regime announced that 70 Congolese are studying medicine in Cuba. There are no reliable figures on the total number of Africans studying in Cuba but many African students are known to travel there either for academic or military training. In addition, groups of Cuban medical or economic technicians are now in the Congo (Brazzaville), Mali, and Algeria. Cuba also beams about 95 hours of short-wave radio broadcasts each week to African and Mediterranean areas.

Havana invites African organizations to send representatives to special Cuban events such as the annual 26 July celebrations. Portuguese African rebel leader Amilcar Cabral and Congolese rebel leader Gaston Soumialot in particular have been frequent visitors in recent years. It is likely that the Cuban leaders take pains to impress their African friends with the need for employing armed struggle to gain political power, and that they offer the more important visitors limited funds and military training.

The following is a summary of Cuban subversive activities in Africa during the last 12 months:

Congo (Brazzaville)

Cuban military personnel have been in the Congo (Brazzaville) for about a year, giving paramilitary training to the National Civil Defense Corps (NCCD), the Action for Rural Renewal (ARR)--originally formed to employ youth in agricultural projects and road maintenance--and the youth wing of the ruling political party. Some NCCD units are led by Cubans. Since December 1965, about 50 Cubans have formed the presidential guard unit. There are reportedly also a few Cuban sailors in the small Congolese Navy. At least 300 Cuban military and technical personnel are believed to be in the Congo (Brazzaville); and 150 more "agricultural experts" were scheduled to arrive soon, according to a 2 July 1966 Congolese radio announcement. The radio has also announced that in January 1966, Cuba granted the regime 220 scholarships for training doctors and agricultural experts.

Both President Massamba-Debat and Prime Minister Noumazalay have praised the crucial role the Cubans played during the recent army revolt and have stated that their regime is still in power only because of Cuban support. The Cubans guarded party and government leaders, as well as key buildings during the disturbances, and prevented the Congolese Army from overthrowing the pro-Communist Brazzaville regime.

The Cuban military personnel are rumored to be under the leadership of Captain Santiago Terry. Major Jorge Serguera, the Cuban ambassador in Brazzaville until recently, apparently directed Cuban subversive activities in the surrounding area;

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Congo (Kinshasa)

The Cubans were very active on behalf of the Congo rebels at the height of the 1964-65 rebellion.

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a sizable number of Cubans were with the insurgents in the Fizi region of the Congo on the north-western shore of Lake Tanganyika. Their training apparently paid dividends; the rebels showed greater skill in paramilitary operations than previously.

Cuban training of Congolese dissidents apparently began in 1961. About 15 Congolese traveled to Cuba late that year or in early 1962, presumably for guerrilla warfare training or ideological indoctrination, or both. About a year ago it was noted that Cuban soldiers had been participating in ambushes and rebel attacks in the eastern Congo. An influx of Cubans apparently took place there last summer. Groups of Cubans arrived in Dar-es-Salaam in late August and early September 1965.

The Cuban military personnel in the Congo apparently were pulled out after the series of rebel defeats in November 1965; a large number of Cubans left Dar-es-Salaam in late December and early January. The Cubans as well as the Chinese Communists have offered to train some exiled Congolese rebels from the faction headed by Gaston Soumialot. However, Soumialot and his followers are shying away from armed action and appear to be concentrating on building a well-trained and disciplined Congolese cadre-in-exile.

Portuguese Africa

Cuba first began to assist Angolan exiles through Agostinho Neto, head of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), one of the two principal Angolan nationalist groups. Havana's support to the MPLA has consisted of the assignment of Cuban personnel in the Congo (Brazzaville) as guerrilla warfare instructors. Recently, some MPLA members went to Cuba, presumably for military training or indoctrination. Agostinho Neto was in Cuba in March 1966 soliciting material assistance from Cuban leaders.

Portuguese Guinean rebel leader Amilcar Cabral's action group may also have received assistance and training from the Cubans in recent months. His organization is based in and normally receives its arms through Guinea. At least one Cuban ship is known to have offloaded military equipment at Conakry during the second week of June; the arms were destined for the rebels in Portuguese Guinea.

Occasional reports suggest the Cubans are making efforts to gain influence in the Mozambique nationalist movements, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique (COREMO).

Algeria

It would not be surprising if efforts were being made by Havana to improve relations with Algiers. The fall of Ben Bella in June 1965 was the biggest setback Cuba has suffered in Africa. The Ben Bella regime was Cuba's strongest African supporter and cooperated closely with the Castro regime in assisting African extremist groups. Castro bitterly denounced the Boumediene coup. Relations between the two countries have remained cool since the coup.

However, the Cubans have maintained a team of medical officers in Algeria. The Cuban delegation which attended Algeria's independence day celebrations on 5 July reportedly pressed Algerian officials for a strengthening of Cuban-Algerian friendship. The Boumediene regime has reciprocated by sending a delegation to Cuba for the 26 July celebrations. In addition, Jorge Serguera, Cuba's former ambassador to Algeria who was sent to the Congo (Brazzaville) in July 1965, has recently returned to Algiers. There are still hitches in Cuban-Algerian relations, but a rapprochement may be effected.

Executive Registry

66-3526

10 August 1966

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Mr. Donald Ropa
The White House

Dear Don:

Attached per your recent request is a sanitized version of an OCI memorandum on Cuban Subversive Activities in Africa.

The text accurately reflects our assessment of the facts of the situation. However, since I understand that it may be passed to the press, I strongly recommend that the text be checked out with the Department of State to make certain that public disclosure of these facts is desirable from a political viewpoint.

Sincerely yours,

R. J. Smith
Deputy Director for Intelligence

Attachment: a/s

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